

Parks and Recreation Winter Advisory

EXERCISE AND COLD WEATHER: TIPS TO STAY SAFE OUTDOORS

Almost everyone can exercise safely during the cold weather. The following tips can help you stay safe and warm while working out in the cold.

Dressing in layers, protecting your hands and feet, and paying attention to the forecast can help you stay safe and warm while exercising outdoors in cold weather.

Dress in layers that you can remove as soon as you start to sweat and then put back on as needed. First put on a thin layer of synthetic material, such as polypropylene, which draws sweat away from your body. Avoid cotton, which stays wet next to your skin. Next add a layer of fleece or wool for insulation. Top this with a waterproof breathable outer layer. A heavy down jacket or vest may cause you to overheat if you are exercising hard. If it is very cold consider wearing a face mask or scarf to warm the air before it enters your lungs.

Protect your hands, feet and ears:

When it is cold, blood flow is concentrated on your body's core, leaving your hands and feet vulnerable to frostbite. Try wearing a thin pair of gloves under a pair of heavier mittens lined with wool or fleece. Consider buying boots and exercise shoes a half size larger than usual to allow for a thick thermal sock or an extra pair of socks.

Pay attention to the weather conditions and wind chill:

Exercising when it is cold, snowing or raining can make you more vulnerable to the cold. If it is extremely cold, you may need to take your exercise indoors.

Wind chill extremes can take exercising outdoors unsafe even if you dress warmly. The wind chill can penetrate your clothes and remove the insulating layer of warm air that surrounds your body, and any exposed skin is vulnerable to frostbite.

Choose the appropriate gear:

If it is dark when you exercise outside, wear reflective clothing. To stay steady on your feet choose footwear with enough traction to prevent falls, especially if it is icy or snowy. Wear a helmet when downhill skiing, snowboarding and snowmobiling. Consider using chemical heat packs to warm your hands or feet.